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First 100 years

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# The First Hundred Years

The Chapel Hill  
Presbyterian Church

1849-1949





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# The First Hundred Years

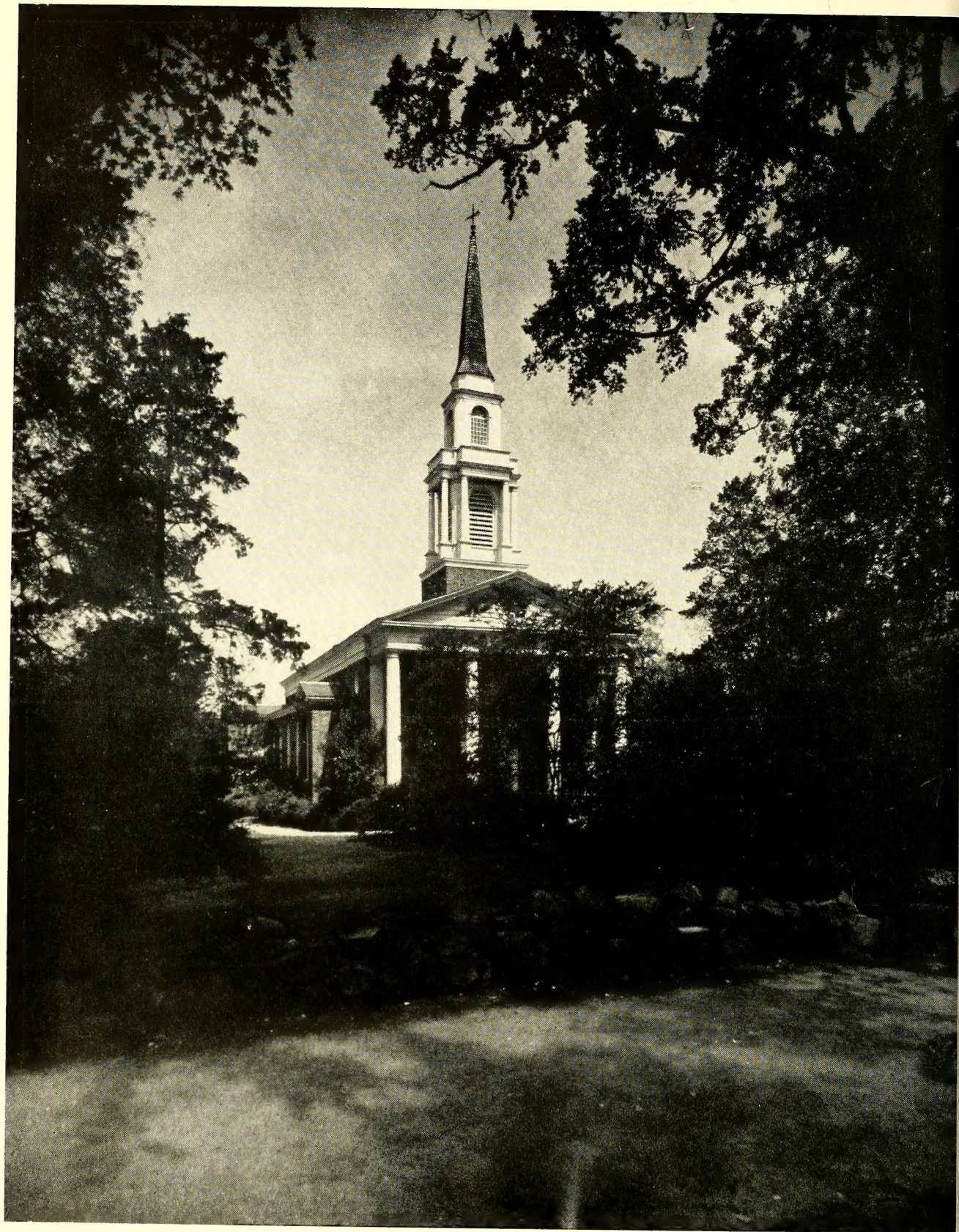


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# The First Hundred Years

The Chapel Hill  
Presbyterian Church

1849-1949

## CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Wallace E. Caldwell, *Chapel Hill*

John R. Cunningham, *Davidson College*

John M. Foushee, *Chapel Hill*

Frank P. Graham, *Washington, D. C.*

Mrs. G. A. Harrer, *Chapel Hill*

Charles M. Jones, *Chapel Hill*

J. Spencer Love, *Washington, D. C.*

Phillips Russell, *Chapel Hill*

J. Maryon Saunders, *Chapel Hill*

William E. Thompson, *Chapel Hill*

Charles W. Tillett, *Charlotte*

C. R. Wharton, *Greensboro*

M. T. Van Hecke, *Chapel Hill, Chairman*



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## FOREWORD

The Presbyterian Church of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, celebrated its 100th anniversary on Friday and Sunday, October 14 and 16, 1949, in conjunction with the fall meeting of the Orange Presbytery. After the Centennial Dinner, Friday evening, there were reminiscences by Mrs. Lucy Phillips Russell, Mrs. Hope S. Chamberlain, the Reverend J. H. P. McNatt, Miss Cornelia Love, and others, and an historical drama portraying, through impersonations of Governor Swain, Professor Hedrick, Mrs. Spencer and "Parson" Moss, the significant periods in the history of this Church. Sunday morning, Dr. Kenneth J. Foreman preached the Centennial Sermon at two services. That evening, the congregation took part in a panel discussion of "The Task of the Church Today." The panel included Dr. Waldo Beach, Dr. Kenneth J. Foreman, Dr. John H. Marion, the Reverend Marion S. Huske and Mr. George Worth.

Gifts to the Centennial Fund from Chapel Hill, all parts of North Carolina and thirteen other states and territories have enabled us to rebuild the steeple, to repair and redecorate the Church, and to pay off the indebtedness on the new education building.

Thus we have been made profoundly aware of the meaning of our heritage and of our opportunity. And we begin the work of the next 100 years in a Church of refreshed strength and beauty, debt-free and reinvigorated for its dynamic role in the life of the University community.

CHARLES M. JONES,  
*Minister*

February 1, 1950





## EARLIEST MEMORIES OF THIS CHURCH

MRS. LUCY PHILLIPS RUSSELL,

*Rockingham, North Carolina*

Seeing that I am compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses makes me feel very deeply my obligation to tell you the truth about my earliest memories of this church, and because I am a stranger to most of you, I ask you to excuse me for introducing myself as the daughter of Charles Phillips, the grand-daughter of James Phillips, both ministers of this church serving without pay because they were members of the faculty of the university, therefore employees of the State. My mother was the first person to join this church, my oldest sister was the first baby to be christened at this altar and my brother's funeral was the last to be held in the old building. So you see my roots here are deep and strong and I can paraphrase a familiar hymn:

“Her walls before me stand  
Dear as the apple of my eye  
And graven on my hand.”

My earliest memories of this church began in the basement-dining room of my father's house, now the Manse (at 513 E. Franklin St).

Early every Sunday morning the family assembled for breakfast, for there was no late sleeping on the Sabbath day; a noble meal it was, no casual affair of toast and coffee. That part over, the servants filed in for family prayers. I was snuggled in the crook of my father's arm as he read the 122nd Psalm: “I was glad when they said unto me ‘Let us go unto the house of the Lord.’ ” I wondered where it was and who was the Lord. Then we sang a hymn, Rous' version:

“The Lord my shepherd is.  
I shall be well supplied,  
Since He is mine and I am His,  
What can I want beside?”

Another hymn that my father loved was:

“Oh, Thou from whom all goodness flows,  
I lift my soul to Thee;

In all my trials, conflicts, woes,  
Dear Lord, remember me."

I loved the vibration of my father's sonorous voice as I leaned against his breast and unconsciously drank in the beauty of our great hymns and learned to sing before I could talk plainly. After a short prayer, all kneeling,—because my father said that there are only two proper positions for a sinner before his Lord—on his knees or on his feet,—we were dismissed to get ready for Sunday School and Church.

A year or two later I was promoted to going to the Lord's house with the other children and sitting in a wriggling row between our mother and father. It was winter, and winters in Chapel Hill were even colder then than now. The heat from the one wood-burning stove did not reach our pew, but what of that? One went to church to worship God and not to think of one's own comfort. My grandmother, Mrs. James Phillips, was an exception to this rule on account of her extreme age. I can see her now, pacing slowly up the aisle, a tall, erect, dignified figure, her long black dress trailing behind her, following her came Uncle Ben Craig, the colored sexton, taller, more erect, more dignified, also clothed in black, carrying a "Dutch Stove" for the warming of her feet. A "Dutch Stove" is, or was, a square box of heavy tin, perforated on the sides and holding a shovel full of glowing coals, a great comfort in the icy building. My feet were cold too, why should I not share my grandmother's stove? I slipped past my father's restraining knee and followed Uncle Ben to grandmother's pew, she smiled and welcomed me, but was I allowed to enjoy the comfort I craved? Indeed not. Uncle Ben stooped from his great height, seized my small paw and restored me to my proper place among the other cold children in the family pew. The brother next to me whispered, "Smarty."

Another most vivid memory is that of Communion Sunday. This ceremony was celebrated at night, our parents had been to a service of preparation the night before and had come home with quiet, serious faces that sent the most hilarious child quietly to bed. The lesson at prayers next morning was about the Last Supper, the tender words, "This do in remembrance



of Me" falling on my mind like a command from beloved lips that *must* be obeyed. And we sang:

"Forever here my rest shall be  
Close to Thy bleeding side.  
This all my hope and all my plea  
For me the Savior died."

The atmosphere of our home all that day was one of quiet solemnity, no romping games, no wild races down the street to our cousin's home, we children felt as if we were on the eve of some mysterious event which we did not exactly understand. We went to Sunday School and Church; we ate a cold dinner cooked the day before. Then we learned a hymn or a Psalm and recited them to mother. Competition was as fine about making a perfect recitation as it is today over making a perfect score in football. Mother read to us: *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Milton's Paradise Lost*, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, *The Covenanters*, *Ministering Children*. Strong meat for babes? Well, yes, but more nourishing to character and mind than the comics of today.

Then, after supper the walk to the church in the deepening twilight added to our feeling of mystery and awe, there was an air of hushed expectancy inside the church, no one spoke except in whispers. With eager eyes we watched Uncle Ben and his assistant bring down from the gallery three heavy trestles which they set before the pulpit and placed on them a long narrow board which was covered with a snow-white cloth of heavy linen damask. In the center was placed a tall silver flagon of wine, flanked by two silver goblets and two platters of bread, these were covered with a linen cloth until the proper moment for their service. After an appropriate sermon a lugubrious hymn was sung to a still more lugubrious tune:

" 'Twas on that dark and doleful night  
When powers of earth and hell arose  
Against the Son of God's delight  
And friends betrayed Him to His foes."

Then grand-father James Phillips came down from the pulpit and gave a solemn but gracious invitation to "All who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior who are in love and good fellowship with their fellow-men to draw near to this table and

commemorate the love of their Lord and His death for the sins of the world." Then the elders and all who could find a seat on one side of the table were served the elements by the minister's own hands. Gov. Swain, Col. W. J. Martin, Professor A. D. Hepburn, my father and his brother, Sam'l F. Phillips, Mr. Wm. Hogan, Mr. Henry Thompson, Mr. Thos. Kirkland; "and of godly women not a few," Miss Margaret Mitchell, Mrs. Eliza Grant, daughters of Dr. Elisha Mitchell, Mrs. Hepburn, Mrs. Kirkland, my mother, my aunts, Mrs. C. P. Spencer and Mrs. S. F. Phillips, all neighbors and beloved friends. After all had been served and resumed their own seats the colored members of the church came down from the gallery, took their seats in the "Amen Corner" and were served by my grandfather and Gov. Swain, the leading elder, thus sharing with their newly freed slaves the emblems of Christian faith and obedience. There was a deep silence over the congregation, broken only by my grandfather's solemn voice: "This is my body broken for you."

After the benediction the congregation filed out into the darkness and walked slowly home along familiar streets lighted only by the stars. Not long after this my grandfather fell dead in the college chapel and Gov. Swain was killed by a run-away horse. The University died too, the congregation of this church was scattered far and wide, the doors were closed, and the building was given over to mice and spiders.

Such is the picture of death and decay, we are here tonight to rejoice in its glorious resurrection!



# Four Personages Who Represent Significant Periods in the History of this Church

GOVERNOR DAVID L. SWAIN  
PROFESSOR B. F. HEDRICK  
MRS. CORNELIA PHILLIPS SPENCER  
"PARSON" W. D. MOSS

*Written and directed by Phillips Russell*

Impersonations by Dr. Wallace E. Caldwell, the Reverend H. R. McFadyen, Mrs. G. A. Harrer, and the Reverend Watt Cooper, respectively.

GOVERNOR DAVID L. SWAIN

I am David L. Swain. I was president of the University before and after the War between the States. Before coming to Chapel Hill I was a member of the House of Commons and attained the high post of governor of North Carolina. I was so ugly the students called me "Old Warping Bars," and other similar names. I did not object, for I was only a mountain boy from Buncombe county. My official connection with this church began in 1845 when I was installed as Ruling Elder by Dr. Elisha Mitchell, assisted by James Phillips. In 1846, they, together with Charles Phillips, son of James, and I bought from the University the lot on which the church rests. The price was \$200. The lot was originally part of the campus, which at that time extended from South Building all the way down to Bolling's Creek.

We helped Dr. James Phillips raise the fund of \$3589 with which the building was begun, and I was glad to contribute \$450 of this amount.

On Sept. 23, 1849 the new building was dedicated. Thus the congregation which had been formed in 1829 had at last a home.

But it was not yet free of struggle. In 1851 it had only twelve communicants. Their contributions for the year, including those for domestic and foreign missions, publication, and education, came to only \$422. And we did not feel strong enough to elect a pastor until 1858 when Rev. John B. Shearer, subsequently president of Davidson College, came to our pulpit, to remain until 1862. Before his time Dr. Elisha Mitchell, who was geologist, chemist, physicist, botanist, and University bursar, acted as Stated Supply. Previously he had been a Congregationalist in Connecticut. It was Dr. Mitchell who built the first unmortared stone walls which we still see standing in and around the campus, including the wall around this church.

We had all the usual problems of a young and undeveloped church guided by conservative minds. I remember that at the beginning of 1854 the session was aghast to receive a petition for the installation of stoves and other apparatus that would heat the church in winter. There were members who thought chilliness was next to godliness, and others who held out for a hot-air furnace. The result was zero, and the congregation continued to seek what comfort it could in hand-warmers and foot-warmers.

I recall old arguments as to whether the church, before the war, had Negro members. The answer is, yes, both slave and free. Aggie, a slave of James Watson, and her husband, Martin, who belonged to one of the Freelands at New Hope, a few miles northwest of here, were received as members on October 21, 1855, on certificate from New Hope Church, where Dr. James Phillips, and his son, Charles, were preachers. Just before the war, I was among those who voted to admit Jenny, a servant of Dr. Charles Phillips, to membership, and the war was already on when in 1862 Caroline Bennett and Sallie Brooks, free women of color, were admitted to a membership that numbered over forty.

In the course of these years we had only two serious dissensions. One came when in 1860 Elder W. J. Hogan proposed that an 11 A.M. service be given in the church every Sunday. Since this would be in conflict with the University's old custom of having a University sermon for the students every Sunday



morning in Gerrard Hall, and since I feared it would tend to divide the attention of the students, I opposed it and obtained an indefinite postponement of the motion.

The other disagreement resulted from the highly emotional tensions caused by the agitation for and against slavery just before the War between the States. Some of our most respectable and God-fearing members were slave owners, and they and I deplored the injection of controversy into our quiet church life. I noticed that those few of our members who opposed slavery became unpopular, and when they ceased to attend our services regularly they were dropped by a session vote. It seemed to me that St. Paul, by implication at least, had not opposed slavery, and who can argue against St. Paul, who was for so long the guide and mentor of our ministers?

For many years it had been an established social custom that the institution of slavery was not only not to be called in question, but was not to be discussed in public at all. Hence when a member of our faculty, who was also a member of our church, allowed it to be known that he was opposed to slavery extension and intended to vote for a Republican candidate, I refused to go to his support and was glad when he was led to resign both as a professor and church member.

But the philosophic tranquillity which I so enjoyed did not return. The terrible passions engendered by the war rose to a greater fury afterwards than during its life. Political attacks made on the University culminated in the forcible closing of the University's doors. There ensued the dispersal of most of the faculty. With them went the lifeblood of this church, and in a few months weeds grew about its doorway. In addition, I suffered woeful grief from private and family afflictions. Hence when one day I was thrown from my buggy by a restless horse, I was glad to lay down a life which seemed no longer to possess love, joy, or meaning. I realize now that I was discouraged far too soon.

## PROFESSOR B. F. HEDRICK

I am Benjamin F. Hedrick, former professor in the University.

It is a mercy our eyes are holden so that we cannot read the future, or live more than one day at a time. If I had been able to foresee that my humble person was to become the centre of what I was afterwards told was the greatest controversy in the history of this church, I would hardly have had the courage to present my name for membership. I did so at a meeting of the session held in the home of Governor D. L. Swain here on Sept. 22, 1849. The Rev. Dr. Drury Lacy, of Raleigh, was moderator, and the clerk of session was Dr. Charles Phillips, whose wife, Laura, was accepted for membership on the same day.

I was born in Rowan County, near Salisbury, in 1827, two years before this congregation began to have a history. My father was a farmer. He sent me to school under the Rev. Jesse Rankin, a Presbyterian minister well known in the county. In 1847 I was able to enter the University. We dedicated the new church here on the very day after my admission as a member. Four years later I was graduated with honors in my special field of chemistry. I went to Harvard for graduate work and returned to Chapel Hill in 1854 as a member of the faculty. I found my wife in this county. Her name was Ellen Thompson.

I worked along tranquilly with my laboratory and classes, and tried to live at peace with all men. In a few years I was able to build a house at what was then the lower end of the village going towards Durham. It was in the shape of a hexagon. I adopted that design because I had learned that a bee's cell, which always has six sides, is one of the strongest of structures. In subsequent years that house was occupied by Prof. Hildreth Smith, known to the students as "Tige," then by President George Winston, and finally by Prof. Horace H. Williams. It is now occupied by Dr. Reece Berryhill, of the Medical school. In the course of years, however, I notice it has been much altered.

In 1856 the genial atmosphere of Chapel Hill began to undergo a change. The slavery question was becoming acute, and



men, though not directly involved, began to lose their tempers about it. I had no particular interest in politics, but when one day a student asked me for whom I intended to vote in the next election, I answered John C. Frémont. Frémont was incidentally the Republican candidate, but I admired what I had read about him, and I decided to support him because he was opposed, as I was, to the extension of slavery into States where it did not already exist.

One day in September, 1856, some friends came to me and asked if I knew my name was in the papers. Half of these friends seemed to be amused, but I noticed that the faces of others were serious and concerned.

I obtained a copy of the *Raleigh Standard*, where I was told there was an editorial concerning me. The editor of this paper, W. W. Holden, was unknown to me personally, though I knew his reputation well enough. He was a heated secessionist, constantly advocating the rupture of the Union by the withdrawal of the Southern States. On this day Holden had printed an editorial in which the following lines appeared:

“If there be Frémont men among us, let them be silenced or required to leave . . . . Let our schools and seminaries of learning be scrutinized; and if black Republicanism be found in them, let them be driven out. That man is neither a fit nor a safe instructor of our young men who even inclines to Frémont and black Republicanism.”

I well knew for whom this blow was intended. I was a rather innocent young man of 29 then, and ignorant of the history of human opinion. I did not then realize that a man may commit the most reprehensible acts and go unpunished, but for an opinion, a thought, an idea, he renders himself liable to be crushed. The rack, the gibbet, the gallows, the burning faggot, are all testimonies to men's intolerance in political matters—yes, let us again admit it, in religious matters as well. Who learned this more tragically than the founder of the Christian faith?

I was rash enough to write a reply to Holden. He published my letter on Oct. 1, 1856. In it, I said I was not an abolitionist, but I purposed to vote for Frémont because I admired him and because Frémont was opposed to slavery extension. “Holding

as I do," I said, "the doctrines once advocated by Washington and Jefferson, I think I should be met by argument and not by denunciation." That last shows how naïve I was. Holden increased his attacks.

A week later a faculty committee, appointed by President Swain to consider my position and Holden's flaming editorials, condemned my course as "not warranted by our usages." At the same time President Swain wrote to Charles Manly, secretary of the board of trustees, on Oct. 7, 1856: "In the mutation of parties no one knows when and what issues may arise, and freedom of speech on religious and political matters must be restrained, if restrained at all, very skilfully."

Later that month I attended a State Educational Congress at Salisbury, held in the Presbyterian Church. A mob gathered, shouting my name with epithets. A thing called an effigy bearing my name was burned outside the door, and when I went to my brother's house to spend the night, the mob followed me, shouting and singing. It was my introduction to the Ku Klux mentality.

On October 18, 1856, the executive committee of the trustees met and ordered me dismissed, though under their charter they had no such power, and this action, though illegal, was confirmed by the trustees in full meeting on January 5, 1857. Thus was a political qualification established as a condition for membership in the faculty.

But what affected my spirits worse was to attend this church with my wife and find ourselves avoided and frowned upon. In consequence she and I ceased to attend services, and this was at length brought as a charge against us and at a meeting of the session on Mar. 27, 1862, we were dropped from membership.

But I did not, I am happy to say, suffer as so many heretics and dissenters have done in the past. I went to New York where I was employed in the mayor's office, and then to Washington, where I became an examiner in the Patent Office as chief of the chemistry, metallurgy, and electricity division. Here I lived without further molestation. I was often visited by Chapel Hill friends, some of whom said I was right but ought to have kept



quiet. One of them was Mrs. Cornelia Spencer, always a forthright person who never kept her own opinions quiet.

I felt no particular gratification when Holden, the Raleigh editor who had so inflamed the unthinking against me, became the renegade governor of North Carolina, going over to the United States Federal Government which he had so often denounced and becoming a servant of the occupying Northern army. He was eventually impeached and dismissed from office.

But I was pleased when Prof. Roulhac Hamilton, professor in the University and founder of the Southern Historical Collection, wrote in the James Sprunt Historical Monograph, volume 10, number 1:

"Time has proved that Mr. Hedrick's view of slavery was correct and it is a cause for congratulation that its abolition put an end to the possibility of such persecution for opinion's sake."

## MRS. CORNELIA PHILLIPS SPENCER

I was Cornelia Phillips, daughter of one of the founders of this church and sister of one of its ministers who was the session clerk for many years. Whenever my brother Charles, due to lack of time or health, was unable to keep up his work as recorder of the minutes, I acted for him and you will find the first 42 pages of the original session book consist of entries which I copied in my brother's stead.

Included was the account of the dedication of the first church building on Sept. 23, 1849. The dedication sermon was preached by the Reverend John A. Gretter of Greensboro. The Reverend Dr. Drury Lacy of Raleigh presided at the communion table. In the afternoon the first child was baptized in the new church, by the Reverend Dr. James Phillips, this being Julia Vermeule Phillips, eldest child of Professor and Mrs. Charles Phillips.

Previously there was a small wooden building on this site dating back to 1829, where Presbyterians worshipped on Sunday nights and on Thursday nights during the University terms.

Within the seven years previous to 1849, the Methodist and Baptist churches here—known to us as the Wesleyan and Prelatical churches—erected their own buildings, and this was a spur to our building our own edifice where, in the words of Dr. Elisha Mitchell, "those peculiar doctrines of the Bible which are contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms should be faithfully taught."

Six years after the dedication of this church, I was married to James Munroe Spencer, of Alabama, and went with him there, remaining until his death in 1862. When I returned to my father's house—now occupied by Chancellor and Mrs. Robert B. House—my infant child and this little church became my chief interests in life.

In this same year, 1862, we had 40 communicants, 37 white and three colored. In Sunday school there were 30 pupils. Total collections for all causes made during the year amounted to \$845.

In the same year on April 29 the congregation voted that the church trustees should tender the church's bell to the gov-

ernment of the Confederate States to be used in providing artillery for the Confederate Army, somewhat reversing the spirit of that Scripture which reads: "They shall beat the swords into ploughshares," by decreeing that the bell should be converted into guns.

During the war years my brother Charles was frequently the only ruling elder present at session meetings, he was moderator at meetings at which he was the only participant, and he then recorded all transactions by himself as clerk.

Crippled and limping though it was, the little congregation struggled through till 1868. In that year Gov. Holden, who had inspired the dismissal of Professor Hedrick, forcibly closed the doors of the University as a center of sedition and aristocracy, University professors sought positions elsewhere, and little remained in the village or the church beyond widows and weeds.

In the same year, 1868, the church lost one of its cornerstones when President Swain failed to survive injuries sustained when his horse, the gift of the Northern commander who had married his daughter, Eleanor, ran away and threw him out of his vehicle. I was present as he lay dying and heard him say his last words: "I believe in the communion of saints."

From this year on, the church lived as best it could. For most of the time it was closed except when it could obtain a preacher, but Sunday schools for both white and colored children were maintained, the teachers being my brother Charles and myself.

Even when the University was re-opened in 1875, the little congregation remained small and poor. I doubt if I can adequately convey to you the inertia, poverty, and mental palsy that gripped all too many North Carolina communities in the Seventies and to some degree in the Eighties. The people seemed unable to summon any initiative or any lasting energy. When a gate was needed to keep wandering pigs and cows out of the church ground, I earned the money for it by making sewing-baskets which could be sold to ladies at \$5 each. They were made of bookbinder's board covered with cloth in bright colors. When I had no cloth at hand, I cut it out of old dresses brought down from happier times. The gate was made of



wrought-iron, and if I am not mistaken, is still in the possession of Mrs. Collier Cobb at the entrance to her garden on Rosemary street.

The church received much-needed young blood when E. A. Alderman, Francis P. Venable, Joseph A. Holmes and William B. Phillips were added to the membership. Alderman and Venable both became presidents of the University, while Holmes became the noted head of the University geology department. Will Phillips was a mining engineer and teacher in this State, Kentucky, Alabama, and Texas. Phillips Hall on the University campus is named for him, his father, and grandfather—all of them scientists and pillars of this church.

But even in 1892 the number of communicants on the roll was only 28, while collections for all causes, including the pastor's salary, came to only \$840.45. In 1894, due to a physical condition, I left Chapel Hill to live with my daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. James Lee Love, in Cambridge, Mass., and my work for our little church ceased, though not my prayers. In that year the pulpit was vacated by the Reverend J. E. Fogartie and the Reverend Daniel J. Currie was called to take his place, at a salary of \$400 for  $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of his time.

Though I never returned to labor for this church, I was able to keep up with its progress through the reports of friends. In 1902 the Reverend Dan Currie resigned to go to Dublin, Va., and then began a new day and a new hope when the congregation, in a moment of inspiration, issued the heaven-blessed call to Mr. W. D. Moss in far-off Nova Scotia.

## "PARSON" W. D. MOSS

I am William D. Moss, born in Canada, but for 20 years pastor here.

It may seem strange that this little church in Chapel Hill should in its search for a pastor send a Macedonian cry far into Canada, but that is what happened in January, 1904, when in Nova Scotia I received the call to which I was glad to respond. For this, there were two reasons. First, I had my doctor's advice to seek better health in a softer climate. And second, I welcomed the opportunity to serve in a University community where friends had told me there would be a most interesting field, especially among young men and women. And indeed, I found Chapel Hill to be one of the strategic centers in the modern religious world.

At first, however, I was doubtful of my ability to meet the new conditions. I had been born in a little place called Mornington, Ontario, Canada, in 1871, and when three years old I had been taken by my farmer father to Manitoba, where I grew up as a crude frontier boy partly smoothed down, I hope, by student days at McGill University. Chapel Hill gave me a warm welcome and surrounded me with friends whom I kept for life. Yet I must confess that at moments my fears that I could not fit into this Southern community returned when it came to me that I was suspected of being a "modernist," and that I was sometimes criticized because I preached too much Love and not enough Damnation. The students were eager and receptive, but the older folk sometimes made me feel that they were not wholly on my side.

At any rate, when in 1905 the Washington Heights Presbyterian Church at Washington, D. C., sent me a call, I felt it should be accepted, and to the capital I went, to remain for seven busy years.

But I never lost touch with Chapel Hill. I was haunted by something I felt I had left behind there, and when in July, 1912 I got a letter saying at a congregational meeting there was a unanimous vote that I should be invited to return, I leaped for joy; for by now I had become convinced in my heart that at

Chapel Hill my Maker had appointed me to a task that had been left unfinished.

I afterwards learned that this momentous congregational meeting had been presided over by George McKie. (George McKie! Fortunate are those here today who recall his gracious presence. He used to remind me of Emerson—"With a sunbeam in his eye.") The secretary was A. C. McIntosh, the kindly professor of law, and the motion that I should return was made by Dr. Geo. Howe, the gentle professor of Latin. My salary was fixed at \$500 a year and the use of the Manse, plus assistance from the Synod, which as I recall it, came to \$1000 additional. The elders of the church at this time were C. Alphonso Smith and George McKie. The deacons were A. S. Wheeler and George E. Donnell, while the clerk of session was the faithful Francis P. Venable, then president of the University.

I now began a pastorate of 18 happy years. In a material way, the climax came when on Nov. 28, 1920, the newly remodeled church for which the funds were provided by the generous gift of Dr. James Sprunt of Wilmington as a memorial to his wife, Luola Murchison Sprunt, was dedicated.

The church as newly completed was presented by Dr. Venable at the request of Dr. Sprunt, who was present with members of his family. I accepted it for the congregation, and the dedication sermon was preached by Rev. Murphy Williams of Greensboro. The pastor's salary was then \$900. The annual budget came to about \$2,500.

Thus reinforced, we went forward from strength to strength. The first world war had left a fermentation in the air, which was decidedly felt in Chapel Hill, and students came flocking to the church and pastor, some seeking a spiritual anchorage, some rest from tormenting doubts, and others just because of youth's need for purposeful activity. For years I was glad to be asked by the students to speak at the vesper service at each commencement. As I recall those days of the Twenties it was one of the fruitful periods of my life, and I could not feel too cast down when I heard one day that I was being accused of being a member of Chapel Hill's ruling intellectual triumvirate, the other



members of which were President E. K. Graham and Professor H. H. Williams.

Let me hasten to add that this idea was founded on a total misconception. As a matter of fact, I tried to keep constantly in mind that intellectual life meets only one segment of a man's needs. I tried to show that the great word of the New Testament is Grace. And Grace I defined as the desire not only to do the right thing, but to do it in such a way as to make it attractive and even beautiful.

I had two other favorite precepts: that the kingdom of God is within us, and not necessarily within a church or any other building—not even a University; and that Jesus's great contribution to life was his discovery of God as Spirit.

I loved to recall that the law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.

I finished my task here in 1932 and gave over my earthly labors, satisfied if in some measure I had been able to shed over the tower of knowledge embodied in the University the light of Grace and Truth.

# THE CHURCH PROPHETIC

## *The Centennial Sermon*

Dr. Kenneth J. Foreman,  
Professor of Doctrinal Theology,  
Presbyterian Theological Seminary,  
Louisville, Kentucky.

“Revive thy work in the midst of the years.” Habakkuk 3:2.

It has always been a pleasure to be associated with this church from time to time, and it is a special honor to be invited to take part in the celebration of your first hundred years. It is true, every day is a crossing of the years. 1949 is no more the end of an era than 1948 was, or than 1950 will be. Time flows, life flows, the years may glide or rattle or creak or roar but they keep moving on; all our divisions of time are more or less artificial. For the whirling of this globe is not synchronized with the life of man. Life is not really to be measured in tickings of the clock, not even in risings of the sun or in returning autumns. Yet, being human, we need landmarks beside the river, we want buoys in the dark channel as the cross-tides sweep us out to sea. So we have birthdays. Every year, or every hundred years, we stop and look about us, we look before and after. One hundred years may be no great space in the history of Egypt or of China, but in this rapidly-moving state of North Carolina it is a long time. More ancient places need not look down on us. I was in Speyer in Germany some years ago, and the big church there was having some kind of celebration. Oh, I said in my naive American fashion, a centennial? I remember the scorn with which my informant said, *Nine* hundred years. So perhaps in the 28th century 1949 may seem to have been in the merest infancy of this church. Yet after all, though this church should live for 800 years more, it will still be true that this is the first centennial you ever had. And it may be the best; certainly it is unique.

It will also be true that the kind of church you decide to be, now in the midst of the years, determines whether you shall survive in the century to come, whether you deserve to survive.

I have had no previous experience in preaching centennial sermons, and I have heard only one in my life,—so good I could not hope to imitate it. I have been somewhat puzzled what to say. I cannot indulge in reminiscences; I have not been here all the past 100 years. I would not dare make predictions; my ear is not close enough to this ground. It has seemed to me that we could make good use of our time by considering together a problem which has concerned me, and applying it to the life and particularly to the attitude of the church.

A former colleague of mine, speaking of Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln, said that they were both right: Davis was historically right, Lincoln was prophetically right. That is, Davis knew what sort of country the union had been, Lincoln knew what sort of union it was going to be. Davis was right about the facts, Lincoln was right about the future. I do not wish to fight the war of the 60's all over again, or even to discuss my colleague's judgment. [He, by the way, was a South Carolinian.] But the remark poses a problem. Were they both right? Which was really right? At any critical point in history there are two ways of looking at the situation. One is to look backward, to see what has been, to evaluate the situation in terms of the previous situations which brought it forth. History furnishes the criterion of judgment. The other way of looking at things is to look forward into what is not and never has been, to draw one's criterion of judgment from the unseen but felt and imagined future. These are not simply two points of view. They are two principles of action. On the historical view, the right thing is to retain the pattern of yesterday; on the prophetic view the right thing is to create the pattern of tomorrow, or perhaps more accurately to help tomorrow's pattern to come clear. One is the way of the scholar, the other is the way of the prophet. The problem is: Can these two ways merge? Is there an irreconcilable conflict between them?

These two views emerge everywhere in life. They come to light and often come to heated blows in the church. Far back in Israel's ancient history there was the clash between priest and prophet. For the priest, religion and morals had been settled. Everything was in the codes, everything was in the manual. If



it was not there, the legal experts were at work year by year drawing up inferences, building up laws to explain the laws, laws to apply the laws. The priests recognized that circumstances alter cases. They knew that every occasion is a unique occasion. But they believed that the method of dealing with any situation or problem, however novel, was by first examining the past. Wisdom lay in the precedent. The prophet, on the contrary, looked always to the future, so much so that to this day the word prophet is popularly supposed to mean predictor. One of the favorite prophetic expressions is "In that day" or "In the latter days." For the prophet, wisdom did not lie in the precedent but in the unprecedented.

In Jesus' time, among His most bitter enemies were scholars, the scribes and the lawyers. These men knew the law, literally to the letter. We have reports of some of their sermons and they were as full of quotations as a doctor's thesis. Jesus' sermons, on the other hand, had almost no quotations. And sometimes when He did quote He would follow the quotation immediately with "But I say unto you." The scribes' test for life was: Will it fit into the blueprint of Moses? Jesus' test was: Will it stand up in the storms to come?

Early in the history of the Christian church the problem arose again. The question that divided the church, in essence, was this: Is being a good Jew the necessary first step to being a Christian? The historically-minded said yes, the prophetically-minded said no. The historians could point out with perfect fairness that all Christians up to that time had been Jews; that Jesus was a Jew, that He had never chosen a non-Jewish disciple, and that there was nothing whatever in the remembered sayings of Jesus which could be taken unequivocally to mean that He contemplated any followers, then or later, who were not Jews, children of Abraham. But there were others like Paul and Barnabas who believed they could see the pattern of the future, and it was not going to be like the pattern of the past. Paul himself was a little breathless about it, every time he mentioned it. Even to him it seemed something so daring, so totally without precedent, that he would not call his belief a conclusion or a conviction, but an outright revelation, a mystery,

a secret hidden through all the past ages. The historians might be altogether right, and Paul for one seemed to think they were; but God was not tied to one way of doing things. Though once one chosen people had been sole possessors of the right of access to God, now it was different and it was going to be different: God's house and heart and family were open to every child of man. Paul's view carried the day; indeed this church could never have been here otherwise. Stand by history and history may be ungrateful. Stand by the future and the future will stand by you.

So through all the history of the church and of the world the scholar and the prophet stand, often in conflict, one pointing to yesterday and saying, Walk in the old paths . . . the old wine is good . . . there is nothing new under the sun [meaning, I suppose that whatever is new is shady]; the prophet pointing to the future and saying, Wisdom is in the unseen, it is in what has never been seen. The old path is wide, it is well paved, it is popular, but it leads to destruction. There is another path which is narrow, it is hard to find, it has not been trodden by many feet . . . but it leads to life.

These two views of life are not black and white. I mean, one is not all bad and the other all good. The first has the great advantage of being founded on fact; it looks at facts with candor and care. It may be a pedestrian view, but anyway a pedestrian always has his feet on the ground. The presumption is always in its favor. It has always to meet that sentiment which is held by many solid people: If it is not necessary to change, then it is necessary not to change. Better endure the ills we have than fly to those we know not of. On the other hand, there are dangers inhering in this view of life. The purely historical view, I mean the view that past history always gives us our only clue for today and our only cue for tomorrow, suffers from an odd defect. Though it is based on history, a time-process, it forgets that time has not yet come to an end. As one of Robert Frost's characters says, there are no beginnings and ends in man's experience, there are only middles. A playwright, novelist or story teller (at least the old-fashioned kind, still writing for *Woman's Day*) can round off a plot very neatly; but the



actual process of history always has a ragged edge. The process by which we profess to learn is not done, the mills are still grinding, the river still flows. The chart of the river, to this point, is good to this point; but we make no return journey. Another danger in the historical approach to problems is identifying existence and value, in other words, because a thing is, or has been, we leap to the conclusion that it ought to be. Some things that are, ought to be, but not all. It is never possible to pass from "is" to "ought" on a basis of fact alone.

The second approach, or method, is concerned mainly with the future. It cares less about fitting the present into the past than fitting it into the future. There is danger in this approach, too. There is risk of ignoring the past altogether. No one can plan wisely for the future, no one can even understand the present, who does not know the past. History is immensely important. If yesterday was ignorant, it is because she would not learn her lesson. But the lessons which yesterday would not learn, we can learn. We can see what worked and what failed to work. We can perceive trends and what came of them. We can and should save whatever needs to be saved, remember all that needs to be remembered. Nevertheless, memory is never a substitute for imagination. The unexperienced, the so far unexperienceable ideal, the "high that proved for earth too high, the heroic for earth too hard" (as Browning said), are relevant to the prophetic view of life. Even the impossible ideal may cast light on some possible steps in its direction.

True wisdom is some combination of these two points of view, the scholarly and the prophetic. The wise man neither ignores yesterday nor serves it. Other things being equal, the most effective planning for tomorrow is rooted in the most thorough knowledge of what has been planned and done up to this moment. Yet also, other things being equal, the most effective planning is done by those who know that yesterday does not and never did have all the answers; that when the road ends in a wilderness, what we need is not a road map but a compass and an axe. Scholar and prophet are both needed. To set out to be a prophet without knowing history is to be a fanatic, a rocket without controls; to be a mere historian without pro-

phetic insight is to seal yourself off from any possible progress. No fast driver, indeed no safe driver, can keep his eye on the rear-view mirror all the time.

These two views can actually be fused in one mind. Out of not too many examples, let me give you the best one: Jesus of Nazareth. True, He had arrayed against Him the scholars of His time; but He himself kept the laws and offered the sacrifices and He knew the history. He never thought of himself as a revolutionist. "I came not to destroy but to fulfill," He said. He did not give up the scribes and scholars as a bad job. Indeed He hoped to win them. He remarked once that every scribe who comes into the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things both new and old. Jesus was not altogether unsympathetic with those whose sole inspiration and guide was the past. No man who has drunk old wine asks for new, He said; the man will say, The old is good. Nevertheless, when all is said and all is done, Jesus did not go down in history as a scholar or historian. When He asked His disciples: Who do men say that I am? the answer did not name any famous scribe or lawyer; Jesus seemed to His contemporaries never like a priest or scribe, but rather as one of the great prophets, the greatest of them all.

Now you will already have been making in your minds some applications of these very obvious truths. What you are no doubt thinking, let me make vocal. Let me first say something about the church at large, of which this congregation is a part. The church often says she stands between time and eternity, and that is true. But she also stands perpetually between time and time, between yesterday and tomorrow. Every day is a milestone, every year some particular church is celebrating some sort of anniversary, some leader dies, some crisis looms. In the midst of the years, not at the beginning of time nor at the end of it, but in the current and course of it, what is wisdom for the church? Some would find wisdom in the past alone. To be able to quote what the Fathers said, to refer to theological treatises by page and paragraph, to cite the decisions of councils and General Assemblies, to memorize the creed, this is to possess all the answers, this is all we need to know. I have even seen



it said that the sole function of the Presbyterian church is to perpetuate, unchanged, the Westminster Standards. Time marched on—up to 1648 when these Standards were adopted; then it leaped to 1861 when we sprang full-armed from the mind of Mars. The creed of 1648, the churchmanship of 1861, this is what was, therefore this is what ought to be. By historical scholarship, even by historical mimicry, we grow wise. On the other hand there are voices, not many in our own denomination perhaps, but still in the great church, telling us the past is only a bucket of ashes. I heard a distinguished American preacher and writer tell us at Yale about his own church and religion. He asked the specific question: "What does my church in Massachusetts have in common with the Greek Orthodox church?" His answer was: Nothing, absolutely nothing. He went on to claim that his own brand of religion—I am not sure that he called it Christianity—had its origin in the 19th century. He had deliberately cut his roots from the past. Yesterday, that is, yesterday as far back as the 18th century or farther, had absolutely nothing to say to him. Now that is not the true prophetic religion. Pure radicalism is if anything even more absurd than fossilism. The man who can learn nothing from the past is as bad as the man who can forget nothing in the past, I mean he is as annoying, stupid, mistaken and harmful. Wisdom for the church, I suggest, is the wisdom of the true prophets. Let our great word be taken from Jesus: We come not to destroy but to fulfill. Not to perpetuate, but to fulfill. Not to imitate, but to fulfill.

Relations between this congregation and the denomination of which it is a part, have not always been as close and cordial as they are today. This is inevitable, because perhaps our denomination has an unusually high percentage of drivers who use the rear-view mirror for their guidance, and this congregation has been blessed with few such leaders, if any. Nevertheless, this congregation has never seceded from the denomination, and the denomination has never disowned its wayward child. There has clearly been the feeling on both sides that the other was needed. This congregation has felt the need of roots in the past. There has been none of the radicalism that would start



a new religion all over again. And on the other hand, the church at large has no doubt felt the need for the prophetic challenge that this congregation has so often sounded. When one thinks of the progressive churches among the Presbyterians of these southern regions, the Chapel Hill church invariably occurs to any one's mind. And I do not mean progressive in any trivial sense. I am not sure that this is the first church in North Carolina to use visual aids, or to have a graded Sunday school, or to serve coffee at odd hours. But this is one of the churches—and may their tribe increase!—that is progressive in the deepest Christian sense, carrying the message and the spirit of Christ forward into life, into areas where most of us are still afraid He would be afraid to go; re-living Christ, if you will, as all Christians are expected to do, in ways as bold and fresh as He himself was. Christ comforts the timid, but He honors the brave.

Let me say another word to this particular congregation. A college or university church stands in a peculiar situation. A true university church, and I think this is one, will be even more gown than town. I mean, it will be built into the life of the university and the life of the university built into it. Any one who saw the pageant here the other night will realize how the leaders in this church have been leaders on the campus, and also the other way around. The thinking and the life and the problems of the campus and the church have been interwoven all through the years. Even the results of a Saturday football game affect the tone of a service on Sunday morning. This is even more true here than in some college churches. This means that you are much closer than the average church is to the culture of your times. The university is engaged in the constant task of consciously examining the culture of our own and of former times. The intellectual, political, scientific, cultural achievements of the race of man are here; people know about them, they think about them, young people come here to learn about them, scholars and statesmen here add their bit to the amazing sum. The whole effect of a university, I mean on its intellectual side, is to make young people, and older ones too, conscious of the tremendous capacities and powers and triumphs

of Man; to make us exclaim, How majestic is Man! How mighty his wonders!

The danger is that you may fit into the picture all too well. You may be so awed by the culture of our times that you will lose all perspective about it. You are in constant danger, as every university church is, of falling in love with culture, even of making it an idol. You are in danger, in short, of adopting toward it the attitude of the scholar and not the prophet, of identifying what is with what ought to be. It is your high duty to look on this campus with the prophetic eye, to bring to this massing of culture the Word of God; not to review the work of man, but to revive the work of God in the midst of the years, to bring to the culture of your time the insight of Jesus Christ. As time changes, your task will change. The secular culture of 1849 is not that of 1949 and this is not that of 2049. Nevertheless the church on the campus has still and will always have the responsibility of being critic of her surrounding culture. The necessity presses on her harder than on other churches farther away. It is not a question of the minister's sermons, it is a matter of every member's way of life, habits of thought, sympathies and utterances and actions. Speak only as other voices speak and you will soon become but an echo little regarded. But speak to your time as a living voice of the living God, and you will deserve to endure yet another hundred years.

# THE TASK OF THE CHURCH TODAY

## *Summaries of a Panel Discussion*

### Members of the Panel:

Dr. Waldo Beach, Professor of Christian Ethics, Duke University School of Religion, Durham, North Carolina

Dr. Kenneth J. Foreman, Professor of Doctrinal Theology, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Dr. John H. Marion, Executive Secretary, Department of Christian Relations, Presbyterian Church, U. S., Richmond, Virginia

The Reverend Marion S. Huske, Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Reidsville, North Carolina

Mr. George Worth, Student Worker, Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The church in modern society has the job of being both "priest" and "prophet." As priest, it must bring solace and comfort to the hungry, the poor, and broken-hearted. It must minister to human needs, whether they appear in the local community or in the form of a Displaced Persons' Bill in Congress. But while it must be the solace of community, it must also be the troubler of community. While it must "comfort the afflicted," it must also "afflict the comfortable." This is the prophetic job of the church, where it must stand as the conscience of the community. It should seek to practice and preach in its own circle the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than the gospel of scientism, nationalism, racism, sensualism, and materialism, which the world preaches and practices. The value standards of those within the church should be different from those things said and done in the local drug store or post office. In the southern church of the mid-twentieth century, the most needed thing is the recovery of its prophetic task on the controversial issues of social morality. Specifically, in the area of economics, the church should confront honestly the valid claim of labor to organize and use power to gain social justice. It must also witness for the responsible use of economic power on both sides of the battle line. It must begin to draw into its ranks others than



those of the middle class, which has too largely controlled the thinking of Protestantism. In political life, it must take its stand for responsible civil liberties, and seek to advance the thinking of its people on international concerns which transcend national interest. In racial life, it must unashamedly affirm that segregation in the church is a sin against God and against mankind. Whatever prevails in the world on this issue, should stop at the church door. It must also, in this area, distinguish between cowardly temporizing and Christian patience.

The church must be both priest and prophet. If it is priest without being prophet, it will become the "opiate of the people." If it is prophet without being priest, it will not only fail to do its essential job of healing, be disloyal to its God, who is both a God of justice and of mercy, but also alienate its people beyond hope of the redemption which lies the other side of unsettlement. Doing both, the church will live in allegiance to its Lord and Master, and be the true body of Christ.

Waldo Beach

One of the many aspects of the church's task is the perennial necessity for clear and cogent statement of her beliefs. This intellectual necessity is not her only job; but it is important, and the responsibility for thinking lies on all intelligent Christians. Our creed needs to be related, first of all, to Scripture in a more vital way. The Scripture is the judge of the creed, not the other way around. Then we must be more intelligent in our use of the Bible; we cannot honestly afford to use it as if we had learned nothing from the scholarship of the past hundred years. We should also be more Christian in our use of Scripture; our creed must really take as normative the mind and message and meaning of Jesus Christ. Second, our creed ought to be related to all our knowledge in such a way that what we know will not contradict what we believe. Our formulas were in line with the best knowledge of the time when they were drawn up; we should be as intelligent in our time as our fathers were in theirs. Finally, our beliefs ought to be related to the needs of mankind. Truth that has no bearing on conduct and no issue in life, has no real interest for the church. Our

highest faith does have social implications; and we should not be afraid to make this clear.

Kenneth J. Foreman.

The church to which we Presbyterians belong, like the Church of Christ everywhere, claims to have the cure for the disease of a divided humanity. But having made that claim, and having "hung out its shingle" as the foremost expert in the field of human relations, the Church today—our part of it no less than other parts—is faced with the question whether our lovely ideals and principles are to be merely lovely ideals and principles, or whether they are going to amount to something more.

Will the church in the South, having held up before the world the way of Christian love and justice and brotherhood as the only way to social life and health and peace, dare to recommend and practice that Gospel as something for white people only—or will it dare to say it's a Gospel to be applied to all the children of God without discrimination? Will the Church in the South dare to say that the anti-Semitism of Hitler was a cancer of the body politic, but that anti-Negroism is only a minor stiffness in the muscles? Will the church in the South be concerned to make Christian brotherhood a reality inside the Jones family but be all too unconcerned to bring that same kind of brotherhood to birth in the human family as a whole?

All these are questions that no part of the Southern church today can rightly evade. No one denies, of course, that we are dealing here with a difficult problem. But when a church turns away from any moral issue because it is "too hot to handle," the church by that act becomes too timid to be respected. It is one of the hopeful signs of our times that, while we still have a long way to go before this problem is solved, more and more Southern Christians are becoming convinced that if the church ignores this pressing racial issue or goes on timidly compromising with it, it will do so not only at the sacrifice of its power but at the peril of its life.

John H. Marion



Our Lord's last command after His resurrection and just before His ascension, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8), was the task of the church in the first century and it is the task of the church in the 20th century. Our task is to bear testimony to the fact that Christ has risen from the dead, sin has been forgiven, and the supernatural power of God is available for man in all the areas and spheres of life and that Christ is Lord and Master of the entire life of a believer.

Our strategy today calls for this testimony to be especially directed as follows:

First—to the families of our churches as primary units to be thoroughly Christianized.

Second—the church should direct its efforts towards winning the intellectual leaders who are today the authors, editors, writers and molders of the public opinion.

Third—a large emphasis should be given to meeting the personal problems of people, especially in the realm of husband and wife relationship, and other family needs.

Fourth—present day strategy should be to create a sense of obligation on the part of every member to engage in Evangelism.

If such a program is emphasized, then our National and World problems will be solved; such as the problems of Race Relationship, Capital and Labor, Civil Liberty, and War. Following the Wesleyan Revival, England experienced an intellectual enlightenment and sweeping civil and moral reforms.

Marion S. Huske

One of the chief emphases in the New Testament is the oneness of the Church in Christ. That would mean an actual feeling of community between the members of the organized church as well as a spiritual unity of the Church. A realization of this sense of oneness and what it should mean, seems to me to be a most important task for the Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill.

In this congregation it is hard to feel a sense of unity, since so many are strangers that come and go. A common complaint by these strangers is that they are not spoken to, not realizing that



they are in a majority in this congregation. How can a feeling of friendship, of community, be built here among us?

The Christian community should be a group to witness to society what it believes and how to live in love. It should not be a community that just reflects the ideals and morals of the culture of which it is a part. How can we be a witnessing organization when we are afraid of being different?

George Worth















